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A FAN AND TWO CANDLESTICKS

By
MARY MACMILLAN



STEWART KIDD
LITTLE THEATRE PLAYS

Edited by
GRACE ADAMS

Stewart Kidd Little Theatre Plays

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STEWART KIDD LITTLE THEATRE PLAYS

Edited by Grace Adams

A FAN AND TWO CANDLESTICKS

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By
MARY MACMILLAN



CINCINNATI
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PERSONS IN THE PLAY

NANCY

HUGH

RALPH

A FAN AND TWO CANDLESTICKS has been produced by amateur groups throughout the country; and in November, 1920, Mr. Stuart Walker presented it at the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York.

A FAN AND TWO CANDLESTICKS

An old-fashioned party on St. Valentine's Night.

SCENE: *A room at the end of a great hallway in a fine old Georgian mansion. The entrance is heavily curtained off and there are heavy hangings at the window. There is an open fireplace with great logs burning and two silver candlesticks, lighted, stand on the mantelpiece. The furniture is Georgian mahogany with a rococo touch in some bits. It includes a spinet, a little gilt chair, a spindle-legged table, a large mirror in a gilt frame, and a settee. The entrance is at the center of the back of the stage, the window at the left, the fireplace at the right, settee in front of the fireplace, spinet in the left corner, gilt chair near it in front of the window. Everything is very established, formal, decorative, as in the eighteenth century. Music is heard of flutes, violins, bass-viols, and other instruments that made up the orchestra of that day. A very pretty girl enters in a ball-gown of the eighteenth century, and with her a young man. The girl is fair and flushed, with blue eyes, and has charm and latent vivacity. She is dressed in corn-color and white satin with trimmings of lace and pearls, has powdered hair, high-heeled white satin slippers with buckles, and a pink rose in her hair. The young man is good-looking, blond with dark eyes and a certain smoothness*

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that indicates he will be fatter when the years are added. He wears a powdered wig, a light green satin coat, white satin waistcoat, old-rose knee breeches of a pale shade, silk stockings and buckled shoes.

RALPH

You're very good to come with me,
I was afraid you'd not agree.
To leave the dancing in the hall.

NANCY

When one's invited to a ball,
One is expected, sure, to dance,
Unless one meets with the mischance
To sprain one's ankle or to fall
Into a dreadful fainting fit!—
I hope I'll not—

RALPH

Oh, don't do it!

NANCY

At least I'll try not at this ball.

(They both laugh. The music is heard.)

RALPH

But where they're dancing 'tis so gay
I was afraid you'd wish to stay,

NANCY (*archly*)

Perhaps I did.

RALPH

But yet you came.

NANCY

Why, one must always play the game.
If you had asked instead, perchance,
To have the pleasure of a dance,

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I would have stayed and danced with you.
Don't you expect a maid to do
Exactly as you ask her to?

RALPH

Why, yes, I do. And yet suppose
A maid has several different beaux,
She can't in truth content them all.

NANCY

She can, in turn, at one short ball.

RALPH

Yes, but I'm talking now of life,
I'm asking you to be my wife.

NANCY (*starting*)

Good gracious, Ralph, you don't prepare
A maid for such a sudden scare!

*(She moves over to the spinet and sits down on
the stool. He follows her.)*

RALPH

Scare? Why, I thought you always knew
It was the end I had in view.

NANCY

I didn't. And yet if I did,
You had your end so safely hid
I wouldn't ever *dare* to guess
The secret you would fain repress.

RALPH

It was no secret and I vow—

NANCY

You never mentioned love till now.
(Slowly and after a slight pause.)
If I bethink me it doth prove
You *still* have never mentioned *love*.

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RALPH

I thought you knew. I had my work,
I'm not a flirt and not a shirk,
One doesn't hurry into fate.

*(He draws up the little gilt chair and sits down
in front of her.)*

NANCY

Did you not fear you might be late?
That some one might have got before
(Footsteps are heard approaching.)
And entered ere you tried the door?

*(Hugh comes in through the curtains, looks
angry and disconcerted, then cools down and
bows most ceremoniously and low to them. He
has a rather brown skin with color in his cheeks,
and fascinating grey-blue eyes. He is dressed
in rather grey-blue velvet coat, very pale yellow
satin waistcoat, lavender satin knee-breeches,
silk stockings and buckled shoes.)*

HUGH

I'm sorry, sir, your joy to spill,
But Nancy promised this quadrille
To me.

NANCY

Of course, I'd quite forgot.
(She rises and curtsies low to him.)
And that reminds me, have you not
My fan?

HUGH

Your fan?

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NANCY

Yes, I have lost
My fan, and am quite tempest-tossed
Concerning it, for, don't you see?
My dearest Grandma gave it me,
And it is quite the handsomest,
Oh, yes, and best and loveliest—

HUGH

Both fan and Grandmama I know,
And we had all much better go,
If it's not found, and quickly hide
Our heads beneath the river's tide.

RALPH

Oh, may I be of any use?
My ignorance is my excuse—
You didn't tell me of your—

NANCY (*reproachfully*)

Well,
You didn't give me time to tell.
You see now that I'm sore distraught
(*In the most appealing and adorable voice.*)
And if you had a little thought
For me, you'd both go hunt my fan!

HUGH

What man can do, then, shall do man!

(*He seems about to go, then turns back and confronts her. She is standing between the two men, Hugh on her right, Ralph on her left.*)

HUGH

But, prithee, how will you reward
The one who finds?

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NANCY

With my regard,
With gratitude and fair good will!

HUGH

With something else? The last quadrille?

(There is a moment's silence, all three half smiling, the two men on either side of the girl regarding her with keenest interest.)

NANCY

Why, yes, I promise last to dance
Tonight with him who has the chance
To find my fan. Now, au revoir,
Be guided by some lucky star!

(She sits down again on the stool before the spinet.)

RALPH *(turning hastily to go and bowing low to Nancy as he is about to pass through the curtains)*
Don't fret, for we will find the fan.

HUGH *(amused and mocking)*

I almost think you are the man!
Then go and hunt—I'll take the bird
That's in the bush. For hope deferred
Did ever make me sick. So here
I'll stay with Nan. It would be queer
For us to leave her quite alone—
This is my time, the only one
Perhaps I'll have. Give you good luck!
I like you, Ralph, I like your pluck.

(Hugh sits down on the little gilt chair and there is nothing left for Ralph to do but go. He smiles hopefully and reassuringly at Nancy.)

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RALPH

Honor's the same in love and war,
I'll bring the fan, then *au revoir*!

(Ralph bows himself out through the curtains. Nancy rises and goes over to the other side of the room. She seems disturbed and to try to evade Hugh, who follows watching her. He goes to the settee and stands behind it, making a gesture of offering her a seat. She stands looking into the fire.)

HUGH

Won't you be seated, fair Nanette?

NANCY

My name is Nancy.

HUGH

But Nanette
Is used for rhyming with coquette.

NANCY

Perhaps you are the one to know,
They say you're such a heartless beau.

HUGH

I have been ever since I met
The pretty maid I call Nanette.
She'll neither give me back my heart,
Nor give me hers—such is her art
Of coquetry. Won't you sit down?

(Nancy sits down on one end of the settee farthest from where he stands with his hand resting on the back of it.)

HUGH

You have on such a lovely gown,
It doth become you e'en as gold (*gallantly*)
Sets off the pearl it doth enfold.

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NANCY

It seems you haven't lost your wit, (*smiling*)
Nor tongue to help make use of it.

HUGH

You think my wit's a thing apart
From my poor, luckless, lackless heart?

(He comes round to the front of the settee and sits down on it as far as possible from her. Then he leans over and plays with the lace trimming on her sleeve.)

HUGH

You think a man won't lose his mind
Because he loves a maid unkind?

NANCY

I didn't quite say that—and yet—
(As if meditating something to prove her point and try him.)

Why don't you make a chansonnette?

HUGH

For dear Nanette? The fair coquette?
I'll take your dare—some kind of rhyme
I'll formulate, while you mark time.

(They are both silent a few moments, she watching him with a quizzical smile, he with brows knitted, looking hard at the floor.)

HUGH

She lost her fan, did sweet Nanette,
It wasn't quite within her plan,
For while she played at the coquette,
She lost her fan.

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Mayhap 'twas left in her sedan,
Or maybe in the minuet
'Twas stolen by some naughty man.

Just where it is I may not bet,
But nothing's plainer to me than
While trying some one's heart to net
She lost her fan.

NANCY

It seems you haven't lost your head!

HUGH

I'd rather have a heart instead.

NANCY

You wouldn't be so nice, so gay.

HUGH

I'd go contented on my way,
Nor hang about and linger so
To hear a maiden's "Yes" or "No."
You know it is the day divine
That's sacred to St. Valentine,
The day a lover must confess,
The day a maiden should say "Yes,"
The day the little birds all mate
And bow to Love and nod to Fate.

NANCY (*hastily interrupting him*)

And yet the day of all the year
Is likeliest to be most drear.
I'm sure the robins have chilblains
Upon their little toes. The lanes
Are bleak and covered o'er with snow,
And listen—how the east winds blow!
Perchance there'll be a dreadful storm.

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HUGH (*leaning to her*)

So much the more should hearts keep warm.

Ah, dearest, let me hear you say

The word I long for day by day,

The little word for which I wait!

NANCY (*nervously*)

It must be getting very late!

You haven't tried to find my fan.

HUGH

Why should I, since Ralph is the man?

NANCY

He isn't. And the last quadrille

Is yours, if you the terms fulfil.

HUGH

If I produce the fan, you'll give

The dance to me—now, as I live,

If with the dance your heart's thrown in,

I'll find the fan—I'll die or win!

NANCY

You're willing thus to trust to fate?

(*Footsteps are heard coming down the hall.*)

HUGH (*entreatingly*)

Say "Yes" before it is too late!

You'll give your heart with the last dance?

(*Nancy is very nervous and excited. She looks at Hugh with great earnestness and speaks almost in a whisper.*)

NANCY

Yes! Fate forbend me from mischance!

(*Enter Ralph through the curtains.*)

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HUGH

Ah, Ralph, you wear a cheerful smile,
You've found it?

RALPH

No, I'll not beguile
You (*speaking to Nancy*) into hopes, for every-
where
I've searched with diligence and care.

*(Nancy sighs and smiles relief. The situation is
beginning to assume a serious aspect to her.)*

NANCY

It surely isn't right at all
To spoil the pleasure of this ball
For you, and we'll abandon now
Search for the fan.

HUGH

Oh, no, I vow!
I'm to myself in honor bound!
That fan this evening shall be found.

NANCY

Oh, pray, what difference does it make,
Just for tonight?

HUGH

There is at stake
Something I care for

RALPH

On the stair
I hunted—underneath each chair.
I'm very sorry, but I fear
'Tis lost—and yet perhaps 'tis here!

*(He says this as if with sudden thought and as
if with inspiration goes to the mantlepiece, takes*

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one of the tall candlesticks from it, and proceeds to walk about the room looking carefully on the floor for the fan.)

NANCY (*rather nervously to Hugh*)

Why don't you take the other one?

(Hugh goes to the mantelpiece and takes therefrom the other tall lighted candlestick and goes about the room as Ralph does, hunting on the floor and under the curtains and furniture for the fan.)

NANCY (*her nervousness increasing as she watches first one and then the other, finally gets up and follows first one and then the other*)

Oh, please don't bother any more,

I'm sure it isn't on the floor.

Give up the search, I beg of you!

HUGH

"Give up" was never yet my cue.

RALPH

To give up now I could not bear.

HUGH

But this I'll do: it is not fair

For me to stay, I'll take my turn.

And if your candle brightly burn (*to Ralph*)

While I'm away, e'en though I bring

The fan to win the promising, (*to Nancy*)

If Nancy wishes to unsay

Her promise, she shall have her way.

(The two men stand on either side of the girl and hold up their candles to light her and as if to pledge her. Hugh bows, then walks across in front of her and on out through the curtains.)

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RALPH

He goeth forth upon his quest
And whether in earnest or in jest
No man can say.

*(He turns from looking after Hugh to Nancy,
and gestures to her to be seated upon the settee.)*

RALPH

Will you not sit?
(She sits down on the settee.)
The last quadrille—he may have it.
I care not much.

NANCY

Oh, but you should!
I mean I almost think you would
If you but knew. 'Tis very meet
For you to know. Quite indiscreet
For me to tell. Oh, can't you guess?

RALPH

I only want you to say "Yes."
*(He goes to the mantelpiece and places the candle-
stick upon it.)*
'Tis foolish, sure, to break a lance
Just for the trifle of a dance.
*(He comes back and takes the little gilt chair,
placing it in front of her and sits down.)*
Now, Nancy, give me your consent,
You must have known 'twas my intent
To ask you for my wife some day.
I never dreamed you'd say me nay,
Or even that you'd hesitate.

NANCY

You left a great deal, sir, to fate.
Don't lovers think they have to woo?

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RALPH

They're fools, I'd too much else to do.
But now the time is ripe, dear Nan.

NANCY

You'd better, then, go hunt my fan.

RALPH

That's unimportant—

NANCY

Nay, not so! (*anxiously*)
Indeed, you really ought to go.

RALPH

Upon that article of dress,
Your fan, you lay too much of stress.

NANCY

Since you'll not guess, I'm forced to tell
I've promised him my heart as well
Who brings my fan.

RALPH

By Jove, I see!
But, Nancy, this is trickery.
(*He gets up hastily at the last speech and now
moves toward the door. He has taken up the
candlestick.*)
'Tis foolishness!

NANCY

We'll play the game
And have no one but fate to blame.

RALPH (*stopping at the door and looking greatly
disturbed*)

Where do you think you could have left
The fan? Where shall I hunt? A theft
You guess it was?

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NANCY

I cannot say
And should not if I could—good day!

(Ralph rushes toward the door and runs straight into Hugh, who is coming through the curtains.)

RALPH *(hurriedly and anxiously)*

You've got the fan?

HUGH

One doesn't get
What he already has. Nanette,
I left you in fantastic mood—
I've come back and would fain be good.
Ralph seemed just now so keen to go
About his business—leave you so—*(nonchalantly)*
I wouldn't have him stay for me.

(Hugh puts his candle on the mantelpiece. Ralph does not budge, but looks angrily at Hugh.)

HUGH

Oh, very well, I quite agree
To have him witness what I tell.
(He addresses himself always to Nancy, ignoring Ralph.)
'Twas when you left the chair it fell
(producing the fan)
So noiselessly you did not hear.
I picked it up because 'twas dear
To me, and I meant not to give
It back, but keep it while I live.
Then came the chance to tease you, for
(gesturing toward Ralph)
'Tis said, all's fair in love and war.

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All is not fair and honor's due,
So I give back the fan to you.
It is to you that I confess
I couldn't risk your happiness.

RALPH

To choose is now within your will,
May I not have the last quadrille?

NANCY

You may, dear Ralph, I'll speak you fair,
If Hugh will kindly seek my chair
And walk beside it home with me
To see my Grandma, probably
She'd like tonight to wish us joy.

*(She prettily extends her hand to Hugh, smiling.
Ralph takes in the situation a little slowly and
sullenly.)*

RALPH

I beg your pardon—I'll annoy
You no further.

*(He looks a little helplessly at the candle as he
turns to go. Hugh steps forward and takes it
from him. Ralph departs through the curtains.
Hugh blows out the candle and places it on the
mantelpiece—his own is still burning—then comes
to Nancy.)*

HUGH

Are you quite
Content, sweetheart, that this is right?

NANCY

I was so very much afraid
It wouldn't end this way! A maid

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Can't see a man's heart until he
Makes clear his love with honesty.

HUGH

You didn't think that I was true?

NANCY

You hadn't proved it yet, had you?
Until you did, I had to play
The game—I wanted you always.

HUGH

But, dearest, truly will you now
Believe I'll keep my lover's vow?

NANCY

Ah, can't you see I give, dear Hugh,
My fan (*extending it to him*)
And hand (*letting her hand rest in his*)
And heart (*laying her head upon his breast*)
To you?

*The music of the old-fashioned orchestra is
heard from the hall.*

CURTAIN

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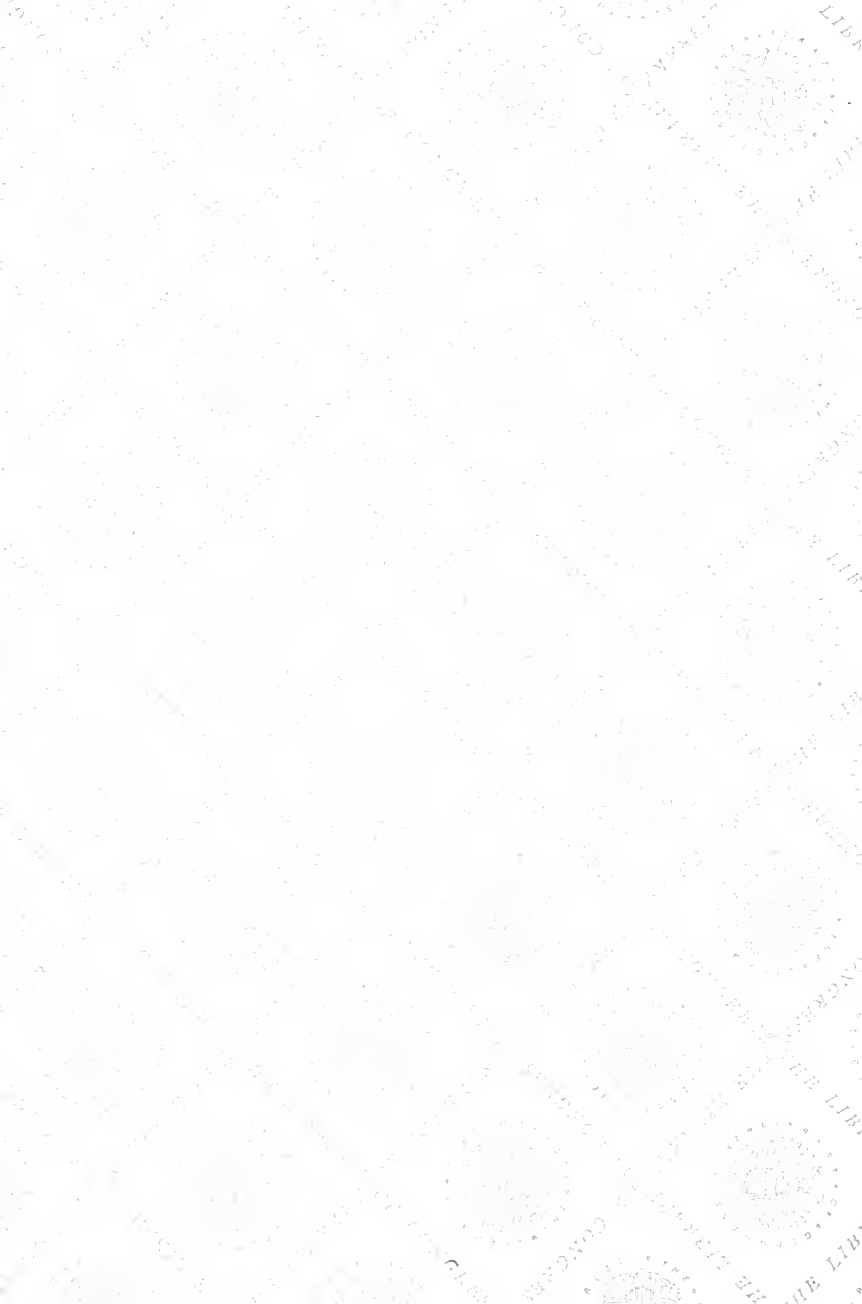
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